

Educators of the Year Honorees

Anne Bender, IB program coordinator, Chandler High School, 20 years as an educator.

Anne is always looking at ways to improve, and when she says she will do something she follows through. Her mission is to promote higher education of all students. For instance, she looks at data to help understand which demographic groups are underrepresented in the most rigorous courses and comes up with ideas to pursue those students and encourage them to try Honors, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses to get them ready for college success. She facilitated a week-long IB Immersion Camp with 8th graders from the Sí Se Puede Foundation, teaching students from all different subjects in different ways. She recruited teachers and gave those young Hispanic students a taste of IB courses. She also is the program director for a Spanish immersion camp in Minnesota. Her colleagues will tell you that Anne works diligently and professionally. She is committed to helping students challenge themselves, and her creative and intuitive work ensures she is connected with administrators, teachers and parents, all for the purpose of doing better for students.

Jennifer Duffy, special education case manager, Galveston Elementary, 12 years as an educator.

Jennifer has exceptional classroom management skills and she knows how to work with all children, but especially those who struggle in the classroom. Because she is familiar with grade level expectations, state and federal standards, as well as developmental levels, she can effortlessly write goals on an IEP, help a teacher with lesson plans or provide an idea to encourage the success of a struggling student. She has the insight and experience to understand what teachers are going through. She can empathize, encourage, instruct, demonstrate, and laugh or cry with teachers as they share the positive and negative aspects of working with children. As the Case Manager of Special Education she is charged with overseeing all facets of Special Education. Jennifer's professional and personal ethics make her an outstanding individual in the school setting. She is one of Galveston Elementary School's, Chandler Unified School District's and Chandler's greatest advocates. Her priority is to minister and attend to the children of Galveston as well as their families. Jennifer is a pillar of the community and epitomizes the words, Sí Se Puede.

Becky Henderson, principal, San Marcos Elementary, 19 years as an educator.

When people talk about Becky Henderson they describe a school leader who has a passion for kids. She wholeheartedly believes that all kids can learn at the same level no matter what background they come from. Dr. Henderson has created a culture where staff, parents and most importantly students believe they will succeed. They focus on the whole child by raising the bar and helping students overcome economic challenges. Under her leadership, students and staff talk about higher education on a daily basis. Students in elementary are convinced they are college bound. She encourages students to pick a

school – ASU or U of A – and get into the school spirit. Through her efforts, students gain the understanding that this is only the beginning, that what they are learning in elementary will help them in junior high, high school and college. Additionally, Becky helps families navigate college information and convinces the students they are headed to college.

Elizabeth León, parent liaison, Galveston Elementary, 14 years as an educator

To many, Elizabeth embodies the community of Galveston. Elizabeth is warm-hearted, caring, and compassionate. She ensures that there is food in tummies, shoes on feet, and clean uniforms. Elizabeth is the strongest advocate for Galveston families. She understands the circumstances, language barriers, cultural and linguistic nuances, and needs of families. She also seeks out the means and resources to help support those families. Elizabeth believes in life-long learning, school involvement, and community. She has worked diligently to bring the school and neighborhood together to positively impact Galveston students. She is what *Sí Se Puede* stands for. Elizabeth empowers parents to become more involved in their children's education and ask questions. She contacts parents about meetings, forms, and questions related to the special education process. She is the interpreter of all special education documentation and meetings for Spanish speaking parents. Most importantly, she provides effective explanation and comfort to parents who are unfamiliar with the process.

Debbie Limano, teacher, Willis Jr. High, 18 years as an educator.

With a commitment to helping every single student succeed, Debbie sets out every day to make history come alive for her classes. By taking the time to know each student's circumstances, Debbie is able to plan lessons and meet the needs of all her students - even her struggling learners. More importantly, Debbie has a knack for making her students believe they can learn. This year, she has taken on before-school reading intervention. Her dedication to this program has allowed students who have struggled for years find success. One student said it best, "I did not know I could (read) until Mrs. Limano told me. Now I'm getting really good." Additionally, Debbie is one of Willis Jr. High's greatest promoters of higher education. She can regularly be seen engaged in discussion with her classes about the traits and skills needed to attend college successfully. Debbie helps her students set high goals, track their GPAs and progress, and learn the requirements of higher education. Her high expectations help students not only dream of college, but plan and make measurable progress towards this goal.

Chris Reuter, assistant principal, Power Ranch Elementary School, 12 years as an educator.

Chris Reuter is committed to building the capacity of our children so they can self-advocate and identify avenues to recognize success. Chris firmly believes that all children should have access to the best academic support in order to prepare for higher education. Chris believes that small group instruction is the most effective way to meet the needs of individual students, so that all children can be taught at

their instructional level. By experiencing success and setting clear goals, students are more motivated to learn. Chris promotes higher order thinking skills when communicating with students in the classroom, cafeteria, or out on the playground. These are skills necessary to become critical thinkers and problem solvers and better prepare students for higher level academic success. Not only does Chris engage in meaningful conversations with students and parents regarding student behavior, he takes his responsibility a step farther to identify how the behavior can be modified so that the student can change, resulting in greater success at school. He never gives up on a child and finds their strengths, which he builds during their time in his classroom.

Lisa Shore, principal, Frye Elementary, 15 years as an educator.

Lisa Shore is described as a “fireball.” She is loyal to her school and community. She is dedicated and driven, supportive of teachers and students. Lisa is a real go-getter! In her capacity as principal, she is supportive and helps teachers grow as educators. Lisa holds a high bar for staff and then helps to get them there. And, in turn, that helps support the kids. Lisa gets students excited about careers and STEM at an early age. Frye brings in guest speakers such as pilots who talk about planes, the science of flying and other STEM-related activities. Sixth graders went on a field trip to the Frank Lloyd Wright Museum to learn about architecture and to pique their interest in math. Students attend Destination College with a summer school partnership with Chandler Gilbert Community College. Lisa tells students that the learning they are experiencing in elementary school is the beginning of an adventure that will continue through junior high, high school and college. They have a mindset that they will continue to learn more and more, and that learning never stops.

Pamela Woodbury, Chandler-Gilbert Community College

Pam is very organized, determined, focused, and reliable. Through her teaching, her students cultivate confidence in their math skills and abilities. Pam is faculty at CGCC and promotes higher education every day in her teaching. She also promotes higher education in the community in her work each semester with Sí Se Puede. Each semester, Pam incorporates a service-learning component in her course that benefits her students as well as the SSPF students in the math program on Saturdays. Her students break into groups and design games based on mathematical principles, problems and vocabulary that create a fun way for game participants to learn and apply math! Pam’s work truly helps students enjoy math and they love the math games. When students no longer feel intimidated by math, they feel inspired to learn more, which will serve as a foundation for their learning and careers when they pursue STEM related degrees and careers. This enjoyment of mathematics helps SPPF youth walk through doors that will lead to STEM related degrees and careers, where Hispanics are under-represented.

Educator's Achievement Award

David Evans, Governing Board, Chandler Unified School District.

David brings a well-rounded background to his position of Governing Board member. He currently serves as the chair of a Maricopa Community College Advisory Council, bringing his expertise to the table to help students excel through higher education. He was also recently selected to serve on the State Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas' Minority Task Force. David and his colleagues on the Chandler Unified School District Governing Board have adopted a strategic plan called Journey 2020 that drives Chandler schools to focus on areas related to Academic Excellence, Outstanding Staff, Effective Resource Management and providing a Culture of Success. This vision from David and other top leaders is helping Chandler Unified schools create students who are problem solvers, engaged learners, critical and creative thinkers, are service oriented, ethical and value diversity.

In addition to his experience as an English Language Learner teacher, David has spent a great deal of time looking at practices of other districts nationwide to learn what strategies they have used to close the achievement gap. He has interviewed superintendents, principals and business leaders nationally to learn how they are getting results and how they measure progress in order to bring that information home to benefit schools in Chandler.

David is a champion for students who are most at risk of dropping out or failing in school, helping to drive programs to meet the needs of every child

Leadership Award

Dr. Linda Lujan, president, Chandler-Gilbert Community College

Dr. Linda Lujan, a first-generation, re-entry college student, earned a Ph.D. in Community College Leadership from Colorado State University, an M.A. in Educational Technology Leadership from the George Washington University, a B.A. in Human Resource Management from Colorado Christian University, and an A.A.S. in Management Information Systems from Arapahoe Community College.

Prior to coming to CGCC, Dr. Lujan was the Vice President for Academic Affairs at South Mountain Community College, another Maricopa college. Before relocating to Arizona, Dr. Lujan served almost eight years as a community college administrator in the Colorado Community College System. Dr. Lujan also spent over 13 years as a faculty member and division chair in Computer Science and Information Systems.

Dr. Lujan was profiled in an October 2006 community college supplement to the Chronicle of Higher Education entitled, "I Wanted to Give Something Back," where she described her non-traditional pathway into higher education. She has published and presented nationally. She is active in the community and serves on numerous boards and commissions locally and nationally, but she believes her greatest claim to fame is as a wife, mother, grandmother, human being, and leader who believes we can all make a difference on this planet.